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WESTMINSTER HALL.

THE stranger who may have chanced to be in Parliament Street about two o'clock on the afternoon of the second day of November in any year, will probably have beheld a curious procession slowly wending its way along that thoroughfare. He will have noticed that it consisted of some twenty carriages—in the interiors of which about double that number of rubicund faces, enshrouded in enormous wigs, can be perceived. Vague ideas that it was the Queen proceeding to open parliament in person will probably have flitted through the spectator's mind, only, however, to be dissipated by the remarks of the passers-by, which inform him audibly enough that 'it's those hold judges a-goin' to hopen the law-courts!' And the information would have been correct; for in accordance with an old custom, the judges and leading Q.C.s invariably breakfast with the Lord Chancellor, at his private residence, upon the first day of Michaelmas term (November 2); after which the judges proceed in state to Westminster Hall to open the law-courts, and thereby inaugurate the legal year.

If the spectator's curiosity induced him to follow the string of carriages down Parliament Street, he would see them draw up in succession at the principal entrance of Westminster Hall, and he would behold their occupants alight in order of precedence, and slowly make their way through the narrow lane kept for them by the police among the spectators to their respective courts. First would come the Lord Chancellor—erect, pale, and gorgeous to behold in his gold-embroidered robes; whilst, closely treading upon his heels, would follow the Lord Chief-justice of England, attired in scarlet and ermine, and with the massive gold chain of his office depending from his neck. Then there would come the Lord Chief-justice of the Common Pleas, and the Lord Chief-baron of the Exchequer; after whom, but *longo intervallo*, the—comparatively—insignificant crowd of puisne judges of the three courts of Queen's Bench, Common Pleas, and Exchequer. In a few moments,

the spectator would see the judges disappear within the doors of their respective courts, and the crowd of spectators which had filled Westminster Hall disperse. Let us, however, my reader, instead of following the unthinking multitude, which departs the moment the show is over, enter the first door on the right of Westminster Hall—namely, that which leadeth unto Her Majesty's Court of Queen's Bench. Pushing back the door, we find ourselves in a narrow passage—the first object in which that attracts our attention is an apple-woman's stall! Yes, my country reader—you whose ideas of the precincts of a court of law are taken from the assize courts of the town of Cotton-cum-Barley, from which such a sacrilegious intruder would be ruthlessly expelled by fussy policemen—it is right that you should know that there is actually established at the very door of the supreme court of common law in England that most familiar of objects, an apple-woman's stall! Nay, it is even whispered in Westminster Hall that an eminent Attorney-general has been seen more than once to stop and buy a piece of hard-bake of the decent old woman who presides at it. This report must, however, have surely been set afloat by those misguided men who assert—what I, with my respect for the constituted authorities of my country, will never bring myself to believe—that an eminent Lord Chancellor is in the constant habit of travelling during the parliamentary session from Lincoln's Inn to Westminster by the penny-boat from the Temple pier!

However, let us raise the red curtain which hangs just beyond the apple-woman's stall, and by so doing we shall pass into the Court of Queen's Bench. The court, this being the first day of Michaelmas term, is sitting (what lawyers call) 'in banc,' and therefore you behold four judges established upon the judicial bench. The second seat upon this bench—carrying the eye from left to right—is occupied by the Lord Chief-justice of England, whilst upon his right hand sits the senior puisne judge, and upon his left the other two puisne judges. Fronting the judges are three rows of seats, which are, by an agreeable fiction,

supposed to be 'reserved' for the use of counsel—the simple fact being, that unless these seats are actually occupied by counsel, they are invariably appropriated by aspiring members of the general public. The front row of these three is, however, really reserved for the use of Q.C.s and serjeants-at-law. Both Queen's Counsel and serjeants-at-law you observe wear silk gowns; but the latter are distinguished from the former by a black patch on the top of their wigs. This black patch is named the 'coif,' and hence, when a man is made a serjeant-at-law, he is said to be 'raised to the coif.' The second and third rows of seats are occupied by 'junior counsel'—that is, men who, not having attained to the rank of a Queen's Counsel or a serjeant-at-law (although most of them, as you may yourself see, are men of forty), are still, by a pleasing legal fiction, denominated 'juniors'—probably to induce them to believe that professional promotion is not yet hopeless. Behind the seats intended for the bar are those for the accommodation of the general public. Who the general public are who daily throng the back seats of the Court of Queen's Bench, has always been to me a social problem of the greatest possible interest. No matter how uninteresting may be the details of the case which is being heard, no matter although, from the technical nature of the argument, they can understand no more of the merits of the case than if it had been conducted in Greek, that crowd of greasy, ill-dressed men never quit their seats. Before the judges take their places in the morning, these strangers are in *theirs*, and save when the court rises for luncheon in the middle of the day, they never quit them till nightfall. Day after day, the same faces appear in the same places. Are they, I wonder, former litigants, who, having spent their little all in feeing lawyers, now haunt the scene of their ruin? Are they retired tradesmen, who having, in an evil hour, resigned their businesses, are now so afflicted with *ennui* as to be driven to kill time by spending their days in the law-courts? Or are they—and this I am assured is a very credible supposition—the husbands of wives who keep lodging-houses, and who insist upon their husbands absenting themselves from home during the hours devoted to 'ridding up' the said house? Are they men who believe that their vocation in life would have been that of a judge or a barrister, and who feel a melancholy pleasure in contemplating what they *might* have been, had Fortune smiled more kindly upon their birth?

There are four legal terms in the year, each of which is of about three weeks' duration, and during every day in term-time the three courts of Queen's Bench, Common Pleas, and Exchequer sit 'in banc'—by this it is meant that the judges of each court sit together, and decide purely legal questions. If, upon the other hand, a matter of fact, as distinguished from a matter of law, has to be tried, one judge sits in another court, and disposes of it with the assistance of a jury. Let me illustrate this distinction by an example. Suppose that I take a through-ticket, issued to me by the Great Loamshire Railway Company, from Queen's Cross to Hawestown; and suppose that it is necessary for me to change carriages at Hitchindale Junction, and be conveyed therefrom to my destination by the Little Loamshire Railway Company; suppose, further, that in this second stage of my

journey an accident occurs to my train, whereby I am injured. Of course I bring my action at the next Loamshire assizes against the Great Loamshire Railway Company; and the question of *fact* to be decided at the trial by the jury is, whether the accident occurred by the negligence of the servants of the Little Loamshire Railway Company or not. A sympathetic jury of my fellow-countrymen of course come to the conclusion that the Company's servants were in fault, and award me three thousand by way of damages. My joy at winning the trial would have been great had it not been for the fact, that the judge who presided at the trial at the Loamshire assizes 'reserved leave' (to quote the words of the *Times* report) 'to the defendants to move to enter the verdict for them, upon the ground that the accident having occurred upon the Little Loamshire Railway Company's line, the plaintiff ought to have brought his action against that Company, and not against the Great Loamshire Railway Company.' Of course my case is, that I made my contract with the Great Loamshire Railway Company to be carried from Queen's Cross to Hawestown, and that I have nothing to do with the circumstance of the accident's having happened upon the Little Loamshire Railway Company's system. Here, however, as my reader will, I trust, see, is a legal point raised, which, according to the practice of our courts, would have to be decided by the judges sitting together in banc. As we enter the Court of Queen's Bench, let me suppose that the counsel for the Great Loamshire Railway Company, Mr Hardhead, Q.C., is moving to enter the verdict which was recorded in my favour, for the defendants pursuant to leave reserved, &c. Look well, my reader, at Mr Hardhead, for although he is small in stature, although his voice is weak, although he is racked at the present moment by his hereditary enemy the gout, yet observe how superbly the little man argues his case; mark with what readiness he cites every case which can be found in the Law Reports bearing upon the point at issue, with what matchless lucidity he exhibits the exact differences in the points decided in each of these cases, and with what unflinching quickness he meets and combats any objections which may be made by the judges to his arguments. Right well, too, does he know how to snub a weak judge, who may worry him by making futile objections to his arguments, or an ignorant one, who is not up—as he ought to be—in his 'leading cases.' For example, you observe that small dark judge, who is seated on the extreme left of the Lord Chief-justice, suddenly leans forward, and sputters out: 'I think, Mr Hardhead, that you will find that the case of *Brown v. the Great Pontypool Canal Company* is distinctly against your present contention.'

'And I think,' rejoins Mr Hardhead, as quick as lightning, 'that your Lordship will find that *Brown v. the Great Pontypool Canal Company* has long since been overruled by the Exchequer Chamber in *Jones v. the Little Pudlington Steamship Company*.' Whereupon, the little judge, blushing up to the roots of his wig, retires crushed into his corner; and if you look very closely at the corners of the Chief-justice's mouth, I think that you will see lurking there a sternly repressed smile of enjoyment at the discomfiture of the little judge, between whom and the Lord Chief-justice it is well known that there is little love lost.

So the battle rages, Hardhead, Q.C., fighting gallantly on to the end; and when, at the close of a lengthened argument—the details of which, to-morrow's *Morning Muffin* will tell you, 'were of no interest to the general public'—the Lord Chief-justice says: 'Take a rule, Mr Hardhead, you feel that you have witnessed a great intellectual feat, and you wonder more and more at the clearness and strength of the mind which dwells in Mr Hardhead's frail body.'

Although, as I have just said, the *Morning Muffin* will to-morrow tell its readers that the argument to which we have been listening was entirely without interest to the general public, it will devote two columns of its space to a report of a trial for breach of promise of marriage, which is now going on in the little dingy room known as the Bail Court, and in which, during term-time, one of the judges of the Court of Queen's Bench sits to dispose of what are known as 'common jury cases.' Let us enter this Bail Court, though I promise you we shall not stay long, for see, the court is crowded from floor to ceiling with a dense mass of those greasy ill-dressed men, upon whose social position I ventured a few minutes ago to speculate. They are listening breathlessly, you observe, to the Milesian oratory of Mr Serjeant Rory O'Moore, who is depicting, in burning words, the wrongs undergone by 'me fare cleent'—a young milliner who had become engaged to a man of five-and-forty, and had been 'thraitorously' rejected by him. Presently, the plaintiff is called; and, when, upon being asked, in cross-examination, whether she did not think the defendant very ugly, she replies to the interrogating counsel: 'No, not half so ugly as you are!' the exquisite neatness and point of this reply, you observe, causes the crowd in court to hee-haw loudly. This question and answer, the reporter of the *Morning Muffin*, with an accurate estimate of the mental calibre of his readers, will to-morrow record in full, and will further add that it was received in court with 'roars of laughter.'

Of course the result of all this newspaper puffing is, that the readers of the *Morning Muffin*, from the frequency with which they see Mr Serjeant O'Moore's name in the columns of that newspaper, come to regard him as being at the head of his profession, and wonder how it is that (to them) unknown men, like Mr Hardhead, Q.C., should somehow be made judges, whilst Mr Serjeant O'Moore is still left to adorn the English bar. Still more astonished would these good readers be could they but obtain a sight of Mr Hardhead's fee-book, which they would find records an income of ten thousand pounds a year, while poor Serjeant O'Moore's never reaches within a fifth of that sum. Of course, the explanation is, that whereas Mr Hardhead is engaged in heavy commercial cases, in which the interests involved are enormous, and his fees correspondingly heavy, Mr Serjeant O'Moore's practice lies exclusively in a class of cases which, although they possess what reporters call 'great interest for the general public,' are studiously avoided by all men of real ability who are aiming at the great rewards of their profession.

The work which goes on every day during term-time in the courts of Common Pleas and Exchequer, is precisely similar to that which I have endeavoured to describe in the Court of Queen's Bench,

and therefore we need not trouble to enter either of these first-named courts.

Let us, however, walk up to the highest door on the right-hand side of Westminster Hall, for that will lead us to a court the constitution and practice of which are alike different to those of the common law-courts. As we pass through the door, and climb the stairs to which it gives access, you hear in the distance a sound which recalls to your mind the solitary occasion upon which you went down to the sea in ships (in voyaging from London to Boulogne), and suffered horribly in so doing from the pangs of seasickness. But there is at present no cause for alarm. You are safe upon dry land, and the sound which recalls to your mind the terrible past is only the voice of the master of the good collier-brig *Betsy Jane*, who is engaged in giving evidence in the Admiralty Court, the door of which we are now entering. The *Betsy Jane* has, in the opinion (of course) of her master, been run down in a most foul and unseamanlike way by the screw-steamer *Seaton*, of which last-named vessel and her crew he (the master of the *Betsy Jane*) can scarcely speak in terms of sufficient reprobation. As we enter the court, the master of the *Betsy Jane* is under cross-examination, and is being besought by the learned counsel for the defendants to explain how if the wind was north-north-west, as the master of the *Betsy Jane* asserted, and the *Betsy Jane* herself was steering west-south-west, she could possibly be close hauled on the starboard tack? Of course the master of the *Betsy Jane* begins to edge out of this difficulty by saying that he can't tell 'to half a point' how the wind was. He is then earnestly entreated by his antagonist to 'try,' which, however, he vows he can't do 'no nearer than he has done,' &c. Those two old gentlemen dressed in nautical uniform, who are seated alongside of the judge, and who are such amused spectators of a contest in which all the nautical knowledge is on one side, and all the practised skill of an examiner upon the other, are the two Trinity masters, whose duty it is to advise the judge of the Admiralty Court upon all nautical matters which may come before him, and who, in fact, form a kind of skilled jury by whom the facts in each nautical case are decided. The matters discussed in the Admiralty Court (of which the foregoing illustration may be taken as an example) are too technical, you say, to interest you much, so let us leave the master of the *Betsy Jane* to his fate, and pass down yonder staircase. Arrived at the foot thereof, we take a turn to the left, and are then in a court, the crowded state of which contrasts wonderfully with the handful of people who were assembled in the Admiralty Court.

Your wonder ceases, however, when I tell you that this is the Divorce Court—that that fair lady who is seated upon a chair upon the left of the judge is the petitioner in the famous case of *De Vere v. De Vere* and the Marchioness of Broadacres. All London is here; for are not even the very highest names mixed up in this trial, and are not the most eminent counsel—with huge fees marked upon their briefs—retained on one side or the other? That man with the prominent nose and acute face is the successor of Sir Cresswell Cresswell in the judgment-seat, and watch with what wonderful patience he attends to the evidence which is being

given. Occasionally, however, even he loses temper at the wide line of cross-examination adopted by one of the counsel, whom he peremptorily requests 'to stick to the point.' This, as his Lordship ought to know, is really a cruel request, for it is asking the counsel in question to do what he has never yet succeeded in accomplishing, and probably never will be able to accomplish! As the day wears away in the Divorce Court, the crowd of spectators momentarily increases; the knocks at the outer door of the court become so frequent, that the life of the policeman on duty there is burdensome to him; the atmosphere inside grows hourly more and more stifling; but the judge works on steadily, until at length the last link in the chain of evidence is completed, and his Lordship feels himself able to pronounce the two words, which practically, though not technically, dissolve the marriage tie. 'Rule nisi,' exclaims his Lordship; and thereat there drops from the fair petitioner that matrimonial chain which she found too grievous to be borne.

Perhaps the best time to see Westminster Hall is about two or three o'clock on a fine June afternoon; parliament is then sitting; and the scene which the hall presents, dotted from top to bottom with groups of visitors, whilst M.P.s rush to and fro in haste from their parliamentary duties, and pretty country cousins are escorted through it by London friends, under the admiring gaze of numerous members of the great Briefless family, who, attired in wig, gown, and bands, stroll up and down it, is really pretty.

Before leaving these legal precincts, let us take a peep at a Committee Room of the House of Commons. As the reader probably is aware, if the town of Little Puddington wishes to have water-works of its own instead of being dependent for its water-supply upon its proud rival, Great Swabington, it will have to apply to parliament for a bill, to enable it to obtain its desires. Of course every opposition to the passing of the Little Puddington Water-works Bill will be offered by the inhabitants of Great Swabington, who can scarcely control their indignation at the upstart conduct of the Little Puddingtonians. A committee of the House of Commons will be appointed to inquire into the subject, and counsel will have to be feed, and witnesses brought up upon both sides at vast expense—some of whom will of course swear that the supply of water afforded to Little Puddington is ample, whilst others will affirm that it is scandalously deficient. Half-a-dozen such contests are always going on at Westminster during May and June of any year. Should the reader wish to witness one of them, he must ascend the steps which lead from Westminster Hall to St Stephen's Hall, proceed across the last-named hall till he reaches a flight of steps upon his right. These he must ascend, and he will then find himself in a long corridor, out of which open the doors of numerous committee-rooms. To each committee-room there are two doors, over one of which is inscribed 'Members' Entrance,' and over the other 'Public Entrance.' Turning the handle of this last-named door, the visitor will enter a lofty, well-proportioned, and well-lighted room, the windows of which overlook the river Thames. Round a horse-shoe table, he will see seated five gentlemen, the members of the committee of the House of Commons who have been appointed to

inquire into the Little Puddington Water-works Bill; and in the hollow of the horse-shoe table are placed two chairs, one for the witness under examination, the other for the short-hand writer, who jots down with unerring accuracy and with marvellous rapidity every word which falls from the witnesses' lips. Fronting the horse-shoe table there stand a narrow table and a row of chairs, designed for the counsel whose lucky stars being in the ascendant, have received briefs in the Little Puddington Water-works Bill. All the leading counsel at the parliamentary bar, it is curious to notice, are veritable sons of Anak—it being a standing joke that unless a man is at least six feet in his stockings, he cannot hope to attain professional distinction at the parliamentary bar. Of course the witnesses are examined, cross-examined, and re-examined before the committee by the counsel engaged in the case, much in the same way as they would be before a judge, save that their ignorance of the laws of evidence often makes the committee admit much testimony which a judge would refuse to accept. Around the walls of the committee-room are hung roughly executed diagrams of the proposed Little Puddington Water-works, and of the country round about that rising town. The floor of the committee-room into which the public have free access is crowded, you observe, with anxious inhabitants of Little Puddington and Great Swabington, who watch with breathless interest the witnesses as they give evidence, and look viciously at each other whenever a palpable hit is made by them. So the battle wages often for days, until at length some afternoon the room is cleared; the committee deliberate in private for a few minutes; the public are readmitted, and the chairman of the committee announces that the preamble of the Little Puddington Water-works Bill is proved. Of course the Puddingtonians are overjoyed, whereas the inhabitants of Great Swabington look angrily at their opponents, and vow in their rage that the bill shall yet be thrown out by the House of Lords—for, be it known to you, my reader, that before the Little Puddington Water-works Bill can become law, it must undergo, before a committee of the House of Lords, a similar ordeal to that which it has just passed through at the hands of the House of Commons. The inhabitants of Great Swabington accordingly depart by the night-train from Puddington to that town, and, as they journey homewards, they piously thank God that 'they've a 'ouse of Lords!'

One of the most amusing incidents which can occur in a committee-room is when a division is called in the House of Commons during a sitting of the committee. Bells are at once set ringing by electricity in each committee-room, to announce the fact of the division being called, and as only two minutes are allowed for members to reach the House of Commons from the committee-rooms, not a moment is to be lost. The instant, therefore, that the division-bell begins to ring in the committee-room, the counsel who is examining a witness drops into his seat as though shot, and each member of the committee, clutching his hat, runs for his life from the room. Of course the young and active members arrive in time to vote, but the old and corpulent usually come up only to see the door of the House banged in their faces—the result of which is that the inhabitants of Stoke Pogis observe with displeasure that 'the name of

their old and esteemed member' (to quote the words of the *Stoke Pogis Observer* in recording the fact) 'does not appear in the division-list of last Tuesday, as we hoped it would have done, amongst those who supported the cause of the constitution in these present troublous times;' &c. Such are some of the scenes which are at present daily occurring in Westminster Hall. Before long, however, as the reader probably knows, the courts of law will be removed to the new Palace of Justice, which is to be reared either upon the Thames Embankment or the Carey Street site; and when this is accomplished, the legal glories of centuries will have departed from Westminster Hall.

NOT WOODED, BUT WON.

CHAPTER XLVIII.—CONCLUSION.

RICHARD and Mabel were wedded at Wapshot, and resided there. If any remarks were made (as without doubt there were) upon the impropriety of a London attorney marrying into a county family, they did not disturb their happiness; and they were very happy. The great house, which had in old days struck Mabel with its chilly vastness, wore now a very different air to her—the bright blessed look of home. Georgy Winthrop, dear to both of them, and who, to Mrs Merthyr's exceeding scandal, will insist upon calling Richard 'papa,' has many a little play-fellow of his own kin, to whose laughter the long corridors echo; to the patter of whose merry feet the oak floors ring. Once a year, Michael Baird takes a journey to see his old favourite, and to help to keep Christmas-tide in the holly-decked hall. There, Philip kisses Carry under the mistletoe, just as though she was not his wife, and because (he explains) he has such a deal of lost time to make up, which might have been spent in that amusement years ago; and there, on one occasion, Mr Samuel Simcoe contrived (by a great effort) to pay the same compliment to Martha Barr. (It is not without reason, we fear, that Miss Jennings has been heard to say that there are 'shocking goings-on' at Wapshot at Christmas-time.) He was fatter than ever at that period, and would not bant; and unless Providence saw fit to shut him up in besieged Paris (which is far from likely, for what was there in Paris to lure a man from Brackmere?), where butter and other such hurtful things are unprocureable, he must be by this time Enormous.

His son, the divine, on the other hand, becomes thinner and thinner daily from fasting and asceticism. Moreover, he has of late been persecuted by the privy-council (on account of his biretum), and is an acknowledged martyr. The prosecution is said to be 'promoted' by Mrs Bannacre; but this is an error, for promotion of that sort (as in the British army) costs a great deal of money. We are rather inclined to identify the sum of 'eighteenpence from an enemy of the false Church of Rome,' which we find in the list of subscriptions applied to this purpose by 'the Brackmere Dorcas Society,' with Mrs Bannacre's own pecuniary subsidy; though her moral support is doubtless given without stint.

Mr Murk is the only one of the old servants who is not retained at Wapshot: disgusted with this ingratitude, he took more than ever to spiritu-

ous liquors, until all the fine feathers, with which he had not omitted to supply his nest, had gone that way, and he was left without resources. Still young (and brave), he had thereupon enlisted again, not once, but half-a-dozen times, in different regiments, so as to diffuse his good influence as widely as possible. The military authorities, however, refusing to give credit to him for this motive, while acknowledging his claims to their attention, pronounced him a deserter; on which charge, and on the frivolous ground of making away with his regimentals, he is now in Milbank prison. In another part of that building—wherein the consolation of the fair sex is denied to the male inmates—resides the excellent Rachel. Her reiterated assertion, that 'she knew her place,' was of no avail with the hard-hearted judge as an excuse for her procuring one by means of a forged 'character,' and for stealing spoons.

Let us hope that, by some romantic coincidence, their terms of punishment may expire on the same day, and that Mr Murk and she may meet on the Thames Embankment, and marry; for they are eminently fitted for one another.

Mr Frederick Pennant and his wife are still abroad, the former prospering, as his talents, and indeed his virtues (for he is a capital fellow), entitle him to do. The affection of Julia, now that her sister has remarried, has redoubled; and she has even invited the Oakleighs to Hong-kong. This offer was not accepted, but a most cordial one was despatched in return, asking the Pennants to Wapshot. It will be the first place they will come to when they return to England; and then the dear old days will be revived, without that little shadow, which, to our eyes (but then we are a man), should never have darkened them. In the meantime, the children were sent over, four in the first batch, and then (with the utmost regularity) one per annum, to swell the merry music that makes the great house up in the Fells so glad. Mabel and her husband do not often leave it; but Widow Droop's cottage at Hillsborough has been enlarged and beautified for their reception, and thither every summer they repair with such a band of children, that it might well be supposed they kept an infant school. Unhappily, however, this idea is not seriously entertained by the public. The information that 'Mr and Mrs Oakleigh have left Wapshot Hall for their marine residence at Hillsborough,' duly chronicled in the *Morning Post*, has borne evil fruit, in making the place fashionable; and there is a plan extant on paper of a projected Esplanade, with dotted lines far out to sea, suggestive, it is feared, of a pier. Mr Simcoe, on behalf of Brackmere, denounces this as ridiculous; but there is more than a suspicion in Richard's mind that the old gentleman has himself a share in the speculation. It will not be for ever that Mabel and her husband will be able to walk out to Anemone Bay together, uninterrupted and alone, to watch the untiring waves surround that rock which had once so nearly been her grave-stone.

Occasionally, in the spring, they visit London; and the first time they did so, who should they meet—it was on a Sunday, and the episcopal Melcombe was following her with her devotional implements—but the ubiquitous Mrs Marshall! Her joy was great and genuine.

'So you've got young Red-shirt at last,' cried she with enthusiasm. 'I was so glad when I heard it,

you can't think. Of course Mr Winthrop was a great catch, and nobody can ever blame you for that, my dear. But this one is more suitable, isn't he?

It was impossible to be angry with Mrs Marshall; and though her remarks were a little awkward, the young couple only laughed at them. She was a privileged person, and will remain so to her dying day, which seems as far off as ever.

'Yes, my dears, I keep my health, thank Heaven,' said she, in answer to their inquiries; 'and Margaret—and Melcombe here—are all that I can desire.'

It is probable that they will continue to be so, unless the fact should ever dawn upon them, that all her money has been invested in a life annuity—which is, perhaps, the explanation of her tenacious vitality.

'What a funny end,' continued she, in her sprightly manner, 'though, of course, a very sad one, that poor Mr Horn Winthrop came to, my dear! Bitten by your lapdog, was he not? I thanked my stars, when I heard of it, that I never kept such a thing! There was some shocking story, too, about his illegitimacy. Son of the Wapshot housekeeper, was he not? But there; perhaps I'm treading on delicate ground. You must come and dine with me to-day. I'm staying at the *Langham*.—Very well, then, if you'd rather be at home, and alone—for I see you have not been married long enough to be what the French call disilluminated of one another—I'll come and dine with you. Seven is the hour, I suppose? I'll say good-bye now, because I am going to hear Mr Claude Simcoe, the great preacher. Preaches in a hair-shirt, I hear, though, of course, he has other things on. Very good of him, no doubt, but very uncomfortable, I should think. Heaven bless you both!'

She came to dinner accordingly, and brought with her a marriage present. 'It is a cosey, my dear, for the teapot. I daresay the other one is worn out; though dear, dear, it seems but yesterday since I sent you the last! I daresay you found it very useful during illness. Poor Mr Winthrop's break-up was a very sudden one, I heard. I never dropped in upon you, by-the-bye, at Wapshot in his time. There was, somehow, such a reserve about him; but I certainly shall now.—Mr Oakleigh, I know you will be glad to welcome an old friend; and then, I do so long to see your boy! But there; it isn't *your* boy, is it? However, it's Mabel's, and what is hers is yours, as you lawyers say. The idea of your being an attorney, and marrying into a county family! What luck it is—and how well you have deserved it!'

In that first year, the happy pair paid a visit to Brackmere also, and were entertained in Bellevue Crescent at a state dinner (of three), for which all the resources of the establishment were put into requisition. No awkward allusions to the past were made by Martha Barr, we may be sure, who know her for a genuine gentlewoman. Still, when Mabel and herself had withdrawn to the little room above-stairs, which had been Mabel's chamber, but which was now once more the drawing-room, and Richard was solacing himself for a few minutes with his wine below, Martha whispered through her tears: 'That's the old port he's got, Mabel—the last bottle of that your father sent me from Swallowdip. I put the best face on I could, you know; but I had not the heart to pro-

duce it upon the other occasion. But now, thank Heaven, all has come right at last! God bless you, Mabel, my own sweet pet, as you deserve!'

We trust that the gentle reader will say with us, *Amen!*

THE END.

THE MONTH:

SCIENCE AND ARTS.

'An Experimental Inquiry into the Constitution of Blood, and the Nutrition of Muscular Tissue,' is the title of a paper by Dr Marcet recently read at a meeting of the Royal Society. The late Professor Graham, by his process of dialysis, shewed that substances were separable into crystalloids and colloids, that is, those which are crystalline in their nature, and those which resemble starch or gum. By taking advantage of this process, Dr Marcet finds that blood is strictly a colloid fluid. The small quantity of crystalloids which it contains is intended to preserve the fluidity of the blood, and it is of importance that they should be retained during the circulation, owing to the part they play in the vital phenomena of oxidation; in other words, in keeping the blood free from impurities. Among these substances are those known to chemists as phosphoric anhydride, and potash, and these are found also in flesh, or muscular tissue, in its complete state. Besides these constituents, there are found in flesh the materials contributed by the blood on their way to impart completeness, and those which, having done their work, have become effete, and are passing out.

In the healthy state, flesh contains in store a supply of nourishment equal to about one-third more than its requirement for immediate use; this, as Dr Marcet remarks, 'being apparently a provision of nature to allow of muscular exercise during prolonged fasting.' And he concludes that 'the blood corpuscles have apparently the power of taking up and preparing the material which they themselves supply to muscular tissue for its nutrition.'

Certain considerations follow which are well worth attention by those who have the care of invalids, or have to prepare a dietary—namely, that vegetables used as food for man and animals, such as flour, potato, and rice, transform phosphoric anhydride and potash from the crystalloid or diffusible into the colloid or undiffusible state; and that after having been thus prepared only, these substances appear to be fit to become normal constituents of blood, and contribute to the nutrition of flesh.

In nature, a constant rotation from crystalloids to colloids, and the reverse, goes on. The substances destined to nourish plants must be diffusible, otherwise they could not be distributed throughout the mineral kingdom, and brought within reach of plants. Vegetables transform into colloids the mineral substances intended to form part of the food of animals. The excretory products of animals are crystalloid or diffusible; the solid portions decompose in contact with air and moisture, and become crystalloid compounds. In like manner, dead vegetable and animal tissue all return into crystalloids, to be distributed afresh either by gaseous or liquid diffusion throughout the whole of the mineral world. 'Hence,' says Dr

Marcet, 'Graham's great discovery of the laws of liquid and gaseous diffusion lifts the veil which covers the mysteries of animal life, and throws light on very many physiological phenomena which had until now remained in darkness.'

A line of research is here opened, which, as we may expect, will be turned to good account by physiologists. Its importance could hardly be over-rated. As an immediate effect, it will rectify prevalent errors as regards nutrition. Many persons believe that beef-tea is very nourishing, and that it is an excellent strengthener for people of weak health. This is a mistake. Some few practitioners and chemists have long been aware of the fact, and now their view is confirmed by Dr Marcet. There is no nourishment in beef-tea. Mixed with solid food, it imparts a relish which promotes digestion; and the best solid that can be mixed therewith is the beef from which it was made, reduced to a powder. In two, at least, of the London hospitals the mixing of powdered beef with the beef-tea has long been practised, and there the patients get strong on a beef-tea diet. It is worth remembering, too, that the objections to the use of beef-tea apply equally to the preparation described as Extract of Meat, with the further disadvantage that the Extract is always stale.

Professor Crace-Calvert has made experiments which shew the errors of those who advocate the theory of spontaneous generation. He has proved that the temperature of boiling-water will *not* kill all the living germs contained in the water. Hence, it is a mistake to say that living germs which appear after boiling have been developed from non-living matter. An experimentalist, wishing to be absolutely certain that he has destroyed all life in the fluid operated on, should pass it through a temperature of four hundred degrees. As an example of the rapidity with which, in one case, life is developed, Professor Crace-Calvert states, that white of a new-laid egg mixed with pure water, and exposed to the air for fifteen minutes only, in August or September, 'will shew life in abundance.'

The Royal Academy have announced that the profits derived from their winter exhibitions are not added to their general fund, but have been applied to charitable purposes connected with art, and to the formation of a small architectural museum, and that the balance will be expended in establishing a professorship of chemistry. The professor will be required to give his whole time to the study of the properties of colours and varnishes, with a view to arrive at purity and brilliancy, and to deliver lectures on all subjects therewith connected. In promotion of this object, the Academy contemplate the building of a laboratory where researches may be carried on; and they hope that, by faithful work, such a knowledge of pigments, and other materials of the painter's art, will be obtained, as will insure in modern pictures the same purity, brilliancy, and permanence of colour, as are presented by some of the pictures painted from three to four centuries ago. If this can be accomplished, the Academicians will do more towards perpetuating their own fame than by any of their previous undertakings; for, as is well known, many pictures painted within the last fifty years have become blurred and dead, with a constant tendency to deterioration, owing to the impurity of their colours. The 'old masters' were acquainted with

facts and principles which to modern painters are a profound mystery.

Of late years, much has been said and written about the elevating—the moralising effect of art. How is this to be reconciled with the terrible destruction which has taken place in Paris—a city that claimed to be the queen of art and civilisation.

Mr Hull, Director of the Geological Survey of Ireland, states, in a paper on the Age of the Ballycastle Coalfields, that during the lower carboniferous period, a large tract of land, or a continent, occupied the region of the North Atlantic Ocean. The washings-down from this primeval Atlantis formed the sedimentary deposits now existing with diminishing thickness towards the south. During that period, says Mr Hull, the ocean over the tracts now forming the central portions of England and Ireland, was for the most part limpid, and favourable to the development of marine life, among which the limestone builders prevailed and flourished. Then it was that the limestone of the lower carboniferous period was developed in its full vertical dimensions.

Another expedition has sailed from the United States to make further discoveries in the Arctic regions, and to penetrate, if possible, to the Pole. Preparations are made for wintering in the ice; and if thorough equipment, enthusiasm, and experience are of value in an enterprise, then this one should succeed. Meanwhile, a word of good news has come from Africa: Dr Livingstone has been heard of. In October last he was at Manakoro, on the west shore of Lake Tanganyika, in good health, but greatly in want of the supplies which would enable him to conciliate the natives, and pursue his exploration with advantage. It is to be hoped that he may fall in with Sir Samuel Baker's expedition.

The British Association Committee 'On the Treatment and Utilisation of Sewage,' which was reappointed at the Exeter meeting in 1869, have just published their Report, in which is embodied information obtained from two hundred towns. This Report may be consulted with confidence by all who wish to know which methods of drainage and sewage are most likely to answer in any particular locality, and to learn something about the results of sewage irrigation on farms. The Report contains tabular statements in which all the details are given, as well as analyses of the air in drains and sewers. From the latter, it appears that the air of those places is less foul than is commonly supposed, and that bad smells are more disagreeable than harmful. And further, with a view to ascertain whether (as had been suggested) the crops of sewage-irrigated farms occasioned peculiar diseases in the animals which were fed thereon, the committee have instituted a series of experiments which will at least throw light on the question. A beginning has been made with three families of guinea-pigs, and, after a course of feeding, one member of each family was killed, and examined, and 'no sign of entozoic disease of any description was found, even with the help of a powerful pocket lens, either in the viscera or muscles of any one of the specimens.' In continuing the experiments, one family will be fed on sewage produce only, another on the unsewaged produce, and others are to have now and then a meal of vegetables which *do* contain entozoic larvæ or ova. Consequently, when these guinea-pigs come to be killed, examined,

and compared, some definite results may be looked for. Meanwhile, a chemist who has examined specimens of grass, carrots, turnips, onions, and lettuce from a sewage farm, says: 'I find nothing to report against any of them. They all seem to me in excellent order, and free from parasitic insects, or from fungi of any kind.'

Not the least important part of the Report is that in which the committee give particulars of a sewage-irrigated farm near Romford. The crops there have proved surprisingly profitable. Onions fetched L.36 an acre in the ground; spinach, L.22 an acre; cabbage and cauliflowers, from L.24 to L.27 an acre; lettuce, L.30 an acre. A new kind of American oats yielded at the rate of 14 quarters to the acre. Three crops of rye-grass were taken in one season from 5½ acres of meadow, and produced in all nearly 13 loads. Three acres sown with 'bunching-greens,' a species of colewort, produced plants enough to plant 7 acres, and 470,000 plants and 3240 full-grown roots for sale, the money value of which was L.39, 15s. From this it would appear that the most profitable use for the sewage of a town is to cause it to flow across a farm.

Since the beginning of the present year, landslips and flooding of mines have taken place in Shropshire and Staffordshire. In the one case, huge cavities have been formed on the surface by the giving way of old workings deep down in the rock-salt, and roads and buildings have been endangered by the sinking and slipping of the surface soil. In the other case, water has found its way into mines, and from one to another, and has risen until the depth of the flood has become alarming, and mining operations have been stopped throughout large districts. These are catastrophes that have long been predicted, and now that they have occurred, we may hope that proper means will be taken to apply a remedy. In Staffordshire, the only hope of deliverance appears to be in the application of pumping machinery of great power. But will pumps always have the mastery? To these particulars we add the interesting fact, that in North Staffordshire a trial shaft is now being sunk to explore for coal below the Permian rocks. As some of our readers will remember, geologists have proved for some years past, in argument, that coal in abundance would be found at very great depths. Their views will now be tested. In the United States, a greater catastrophe has occurred; the Mississippi has burst its banks above New Orleans, and appears to be washing out a new channel to the sea.

Statistics of rainfall within the tropics are useful to meteorologists everywhere, and any addition to the number of tropical observing stations deserves to be noted. One of the United States' missionaries has made a series of observations at Hilo, Hawaii, which shew that island to be remarkably circumstanced as regards rain. The total fall in one year amounted to 182 inches: the wettest month was March, when 38 inches fell; and on one day in this month the fall amounted to 10 inches. These amazing quantities can be best judged of by comparing them with the rainfall of our British islands, where the average for the year is less than one month's rain in Hawaii.

Dr Von Mueller, Director of the Botanic Garden at Melbourne, continues his praiseworthy endeavours to induce the colonists to multiply their

trees. He says, that of the ten thousand kinds of trees which constitute the forests of the globe, at least three thousand would live and thrive on the hills of Australia. Were planting to be satisfactorily carried on, there would soon be an end to the barrenness of aspect produced by drought and the reckless cutting down of trees. He points out that a gum-tree (*Eucalyptus*) of the largest size, 480 feet in height, would yield more than 426,000 feet of one-inch boards, besides many other products; and that the palms, which yield resin, and wax, and oil, would all flourish in Victoria. The tea-tree also would grow as well as in Assam; and Dr Mueller looks forward to the time when Australian forest slopes will be dotted with endless rows of tea-trees, and overspread with large fields of the cotton-plant, of sugar-cane, and of tobacco. If, in addition to all this, the growth of timber-trees were properly cared for, the commercial value of the wood cut down each year would be enormous. In the United States, the timber of 150,000 acres is required annually for railway sleepers alone. It has been proved also that the cinchona, or bark-tree, will grow in Australia. The plantations of this medicinal tree recently established in India are so successful, that they yield a profit of more than 100 per cent. on their cost.

The medical world is just now considerably excited by the *stigmata* said to be exhibited by the Belgian peasant-girl, Louise Lateau; Dr Lefebvre, and other practitioners of repute, are found to be persuaded that blood oozes through her skin—from the left side of the chest, from the hands and feet, and from the forehead—and the love of the sensational has been thereby greatly tickled among the superstitious devout. Suspecting the possibility of deception (as well he might), Dr Lefebvre placed a leather glove upon the hand of his patient, tying it and sealing it at the wrist, yet when the glove was removed upon the Friday, the blood was still there. The following brief narrative (communicated to the *British Medical Journal*) of a case which came under the care of Mr Henry Lee at St George's Hospital, may suggest to Dr Lefebvre a better test than the leather glove. An unmarried sempstress, aged sixteen, was admitted into the hospital on the 22d April 1868. On the outside of the right leg, about three inches above the ankle, was a discoloured patch about three inches in length by one and a half inch in width. From this surface she said that every month for two years there had been a discharge of about a table-spoonful of blood. The patch was covered by minute red spots resembling flea-bites. Soon after her admission into the hospital, fresh red spots and effusion of blood were seen at each succeeding visit. Mr Lee then ordered a sheet of lead to be applied over the bleeding surface, and to be secured by a starch-bandage. On the next visit, when the dressings were removed, there were few spots and little blood, but the sheet of lead was found to be pierced with holes large enough to admit a needle. When asked how this had happened, she was silent, and she was discharged as a convicted impostor on the 13th May.

Now, we venture confidently to predict, that if Dr Lefebvre, instead of covering his patient's hand with an easily perforated leather glove, will cover it with a thin sheet of lead, secured by a starched bandage, one of two things will happen—either the bleeding will not occur in the covered hand,

or the lead will be found to have been perforated by some sharp instrument from without.

It is stated that on the forehead of the ecstatic girl 'the blood is seen to ooze from twelve or fifteen minute points, arranged in a circular form. On examining these points with a magnifying-glass, most of them had a triangular form, as if made by the bites of microscopic leeches; but some were semilunar in shape, and others totally irregular.' Here we must irreverently suggest that the microscopic leeches were probably needle-points.

OUR FIRST LODGING.

IN TWO PARTS—PART II.

THE Old Manor-house—of which my wife and myself, with our little hand-maiden, were now the sole inhabitants—could never, I should say, have been a very cheerful place of residence, even at its best. It had been built during the later years of Henry VIII., and at a time when security was more valued by the constructor of a dwelling than the prospect from the windows. The casements, accordingly, were narrow, the walls thick, and the house was flanked by two ungainly turrets, pierced with arrow-slits, whence fire might be opened on an intrusive enemy, and which still peered grimly out, like murderous eyes, from the screen of rank ivy that grew nearly to the eaves of the roof. From the body of the house, however, the ivy had been stripped away, and there the masonry was in much sounder condition than that of the turrets, which were crumbling piecemeal to ruin; but the discoloured stones were stained with damp and weather, and mottled here and there with patches of olive-tinted moss and brown lichen. The roof, which had been covered with lead in old days, was now a composite patch-work of dull blue and dusky red, since the lead had been torn off and sold at the same time which witnessed the felling of the trees in the dingle hard by; and the new roof was a sorry substitute, put up according to contract by some country builder, who had used such materials as came the readiest to hand, slates and tiles indiscriminately. The windows were small-paned, deep of frame, and extravagantly lofty in proportion to their width.

Within, the old house was spacious, and in sufficiently good repair to render it habitable; but the interior amply redeemed the promise afforded by the stern and storm-beaten outside. There was a staircase fit for giants to ascend by, built of massive black oak, and with a carved balustrade to it, that, I am certain, would have gone far towards paying the last owner's play-debts, had but Wardour Street flourished when my uncle was a satellite of the First Gentleman in Europe. There were ghostly corridors leading apparently to nowhere, and aggravating doors that seemed to have been set up for no purpose but to bang and slam, and awaken a train of sullen echoes when the shrieking wind swept through the desolate old mansion. There were nests of square little rooms, too small for modern comfort; and a few large apartments with cavernous chimneys, and fireplaces that would have consumed more fuel in a week than we could have paid for in a winter, and walls panelled with dark wood, that to all intents and purposes extinguished our poor little pair of candles directly we lighted them,

so feebly did the weak glimmer irradiate their polished blackness. The house was damp in some parts, draughty in others, and there hung about its ancient timbers the peculiar smell of the dry-rot that was gradually eating into the sturdy timbers.

Yet, when all this was said, there were merits in the old place, and we should have been absurdly ungrateful if we had not admitted that they overbalanced the drawbacks which I have catalogued. After all, the house was cheap, roomy, and in a healthy situation. It had a magnificent view, from the upper windows at anyrate, of the sea; a contingent advantage, of which I am sure its architect, born in the pre-sentimental epoch, and regarding the ocean as a quantity of dirty water, too salt to drink, but good for floating ships, never dreamed. We were both capital walkers, and Shinglesea was little more than three miles off. It was the warm, sunny season of the year, when something of a picnic flavour seemed to be imparted to our new mode of life by the picturesque nature of the surroundings, the bold moorland outline all ablaze with blossomed heather, the great sycamores with their hollow boles and spreading boughs, the nut-grove, and the wilderness of a garden.

There was another merit in our abode, too, which Carry, with the characteristic prudence of her sex, did not fail to point out to my duller masculine understanding. It would be, she declared exultantly, such a famous place wherein to economise and to make both ends meet. Here was no hungry-eyed and harpy-clawed landlady, such as even the lodging-houses of Shinglesea, primitive as it was, not seldom contained, with three growing children and a slipshod drudge of all work to maintain by poaching on our tea-caddy and trespassing on our cold mutton. Here were no 'followers,' no idle cousins or casual droppers-in to distract the attention or to undermine the steadiness of demure little Jane in her white apron and neat cap. Here, too, we were free from that obligation which lies on all feminine denizens of so genteel a watering-place as Shinglesea, to be 'dressed' at all times and seasons, in expectation of visitors. Now, at Wilton, on the wet days—and there is a good deal of rain sometimes in Devonshire—we could expect no callers, and an old shooting-coat would pass muster, and a plain gown suffice. So my dear little wife, with infinite importance and gravity, brought out her new account-books, duly ruled and labelled, as if for the use of a domestic Chancellor of the Exchequer; and the slim volumes bound in yet unsullied red, in which butcher, and grocer, and baker were to enter their commercial hieroglyphics; and the printed oracles from which she was to learn—'Oh, all about cookery, since you know you (men) are so very particular as to your dinner;' and a store of manuscript recipes from the maternal treasury, and, in fact, began to play at housekeeping in a very pretty earnest way that it was pleasant to watch.

The day was fine, and the next, and the next, and we passed them very agreeably. Several parties of friends came up from Shinglesea to see us—the Dawkins family, of course, and sundry intimate acquaintances, and there was much laughing, and many scrambling explorations of the old house and the ruinous stabling and out-buildings; and we drank tea out of doors, a large company of us, in and around a tumble-down summer-house, buried in

a tangle of sweet-smelling creepers, and all went merrily on. Nobody spoke of the evil repute of the place, save in a blithe and mocking manner, and the fact that we were encamped, as it were, in a haunted house merely gave a zest to life and its enjoyments. Then Sir Buckram Grogam and Lady Grogam, in a yellow chariot, drove solemnly over from the Hall to call upon us. 'He felt it was a compliment that was only due,' the ex-civic dignitary was good enough to say, 'to the representative of the old family.' And Lady Grogam said aloud that we were two courageous young people, to disregard the nonsensical stories that had kept the old house hitherto tenantless—stories in which she, Lady Grogam, had never of course put any sort of faith. But she rather startled Carry by whispering to her unexpectedly: 'Then you haven't heard anything *yet*, my dear?' and looking disappointed when the answer was in the negative.

The more we saw of the old house, the more convinced we were that we had chosen wisely in renting it. There were disagreeables to contend with at first; but it was just the kind of place in which, with a little forethought and contrivance, one might make one's self exceedingly comfortable. There was a handy man, a wheelwright by trade, at the village of Wilton-le-Street, little more than a mile away; and this man—who was a kind of cross between smith and carpenter, and would have been invaluable to settlers in a new country—fell to work for us with hearty good-will, nailing list round the edges of ill-fitting doors, conquering rebellious window-sashes, hanging bells, and curing the kitchen chimney of a chronic tendency to smoke. A cheap light-tinted paper—so the upholsterer assured us—would lighten up our sitting-room, so that a moderator-lamp would appear a positive illumination, whereas the gloomy panels of dark oak had a provoking power of absorbing every ray into their shimmering blackness; and a stove here, a grate of modern shape there, and a few yards of drugget or of matting, worked a wonderful alteration for the better.

Well, however, as we were disposed to like our quarters, there was one circumstance connected with them which could agreeably have been dispensed with, and this was the evident inquisitiveness of our neighbours, as well as the Shinglesea folks, as to whether we had begun to be disturbed by those unearthly fellow-lodgers, whose contiguity had proved so insupportable to former occupants. Jenkins, the wheelwright, as he whistled at his work, 'made bold' to inquire 'had we seen nothing, yet, out of the common.' Certainly not, he was told. 'Nor yet heard nothing?' Nothing at all, was again the answer; and Jenkins shook his head with a little sigh of disappointment, but was sure to renew the query, in different words, on the morrow, and appeared always particularly anxious to get himself and his little wallet of tools safe out of the house, and across the darkling dingle, before the sunlight had entirely died away. So with the hedger, who came to mend the gaps through which the cows had hitherto found too easy access to the ruined garden. So with the dairymaid from the farm whence came our milk. So, too, with such other of the villagers as came to the house on any errand, one and all of whom seemed to be greedy for news of our experiences, and almost angry with us for having nothing supernatural to relate. This was tiresome. We

laughed at it, but we should have been better pleased not to have been regarded, as we obviously were, as the subjects of a novel experiment on the forbearance of the ghostly tenants of the Old Manor-house.

But if Carry and I could contrive to laugh at the superstitious fancies of the rustics around us, to our solitary domestic, little Jane, the atmosphere of weird imaginings that clung to the dilapidated mansion was no jesting matter. She looked very grave, and began to acquire a disturbing habit of suddenly turning her head, as if to see if some one or something were close behind her as she went about her household cares; also, she was constantly entering the drawing-room on frivolous pretexts, and I noticed that she loitered and dawdled over her up-stairs work—spinning out her duties, as it were, to the utmost possible limits, and taxing her ingenuity to find some excuse for lingering long in the inhabited portion of the house, away from the big dismal kitchen and the disused pantry, and the great echoing vault that had once been the servants' hall. Plainly, the establishment was getting discontented and uneasy at the mere rumour of what every one, from the village washerwoman to Lady Grogam, had chosen to anticipate as our inevitable doom.

The fourth night came. With it, too, came a change of weather. Heavy blurred masses of vapour began, towards sunset, to gather threateningly about the bare bluff rocks, locally known as Tors, that dotted the highest points of the lofty moorland range; and presently the wind began to shriek, and the cloud-wrack to cover the whole sky; and before long, what with lashing rain, and what with howling wind, the storm waxed furious, and every rusty weathercock and crazy chimney-stack on the old house groaned and creaked alarmingly. The windows, which were of all patterns,—from the middle-aged casement of diamond panes, with one little glazed wicket, meant to be opened in fine weather, down to the weighty sash-frame, which found favour when George III. was a young sovereign—rattled portentously. All manner of unsuspected doors, lurking in obscure passages and out-of-the-way nooks, banged and thumped at irregular intervals. The gale screamed around the gables, sobbed and moaned among the huge sycamores, and plunged, roaring hoarsely, through the corridors, rarely trodden by human feet, that led to the servants' part of the house. In all this din and turmoil, however, there was nothing abnormal. The wood-work of the decaying mansion unquestionably did complain and give out strange noises, as do the timbers of a labouring ship, but there was nothing in this for the most capacious person to object to. An old house, large, in imperfect repair, and with nine-tenths of it unused, will naturally, on a stormy night, emit odd sounds suggestive of a duet between the fog-trumpet and the Æolian harp, with an occasional staccato effect, as of a deep drum struck by a giant hand. There was nothing in all this to cause apprehension, and yet, somehow, we went to bed a good deal later than our usual hour, and were not in a very cheerful state of mind.

To retire to rest, however, as the phrase runs, is sometimes easier than to get any; and as my unquiet head rolled to and fro upon my pillow, I came gradually to consider sleep as a luxury hopelessly inaccessible. My thoughts strayed from one

subject to another, in that apparently capricious manner in which the mind will now and then travel, like some one lost in a labyrinth, and winding to and fro, at random. Old Harrow friendships and rivalries, boyish sorrows and urchin sports, summer trips in mountain districts of Wales, Bretagne, Switzerland, blended unreasonably with a mental picture of Uncle George's death-bed—of the frantic efforts to speak, the agonised despair when speech proved impossible—that had been so often described to me two years ago. They blended, too, with old stories, long forgotten, of dread sights seen and dread sounds heard, at dead of night, in spots not very unlike the quaint dwelling which we two young people now called our home. How the wind howled, till fancy could conceive its swelling notes to issue from the throats of hungry wolves, as they leaped and scratched, scenting blood, around some emigrant's poor hut, far off in a wilderness! What an unearthly screech was that! harsh, near, and terrible! and yet a moment's reflection told me that it was but made by the swaying branch of the great sycamore tree outside—a branch that was cracked already, and that I knew, by the white seams across the rotting bark, must soon be torn off and come crashing to the ground. How the window rattles! Surely some strong hand without must be shaking it in fierce impatience. The noise is deafening for a minute or two, but anon it grows less audible, sinks to a dull monotone, and I listen, and listen, and finally fall asleep.

What was that? I start up, broad awake in a moment, as it seems to me, but Carry has been the first to wake. There she stands, with a candle, hurriedly lighted, in her hand, and by the wavering light I notice that she is very pale and trembling. Now, Carry is by no means a coward, can ride a kicking pony as well as any girl in Devonshire, and was not a bit afraid when once, in our walks, we were chased half-way across a meadow by a big bull. Therefore, to see her alarm produces more effect on me than if my wife were the sort of young lady who is scared if a mouse peeps out from its hole in the wainscot. 'Charles, dear, didn't you hear it?' said Carry eagerly. I listened. No. There was nothing to hear, save only the creaking of the trees, the clatter of the windows, and the roar of the storm. 'It has left off, but it was very plain to be heard, just now,' said my wife. Again I hearkened, but there was nothing audible beyond the wind and the rattling casements. I could not help yawning. 'Better go to sleep, love,' I said incredulously. 'We shall get used to the old place in time, I dare say, and not care for a gale; but this is a rough apprenticeship. Jenkins must look to those con-fused windows, and— Who laughed?' I

I might well ask, for the noise which interrupted my common-sense explanation of the din prevailing in the Old Manor-house was such as no wind in all the caves of Æolus could be warranted to make. A laugh, and such a laugh! No mirthful cachinnation, not even the senseless guffaw of drunkenness, but a harsh, horrid laugh, such as a company of demons might be supposed to shout forth in hellish exultation over some lost soul—a laugh that froze the blood of those that listened to it. The silence that followed was almost as shocking as the sound with which my ears were still tingling. Then came a long-drawn whining cry,

like that of a hound in pain; and then again there was nothing beyond the harsh creaking of the sycamore, and the ceaseless dirge of the melancholy wind. A minute, two minutes, three—I know the exact lapse of time, because by the light of the candle which my wife held I could see the dial of the watch by my bedside, and I found myself, with the half-conscious gravity which we all are apt to bring at moments of bewilderment to some trivial subject of observation, heedfully marking the slender second-hand as it jerked from one figure to another around the edge of its tiny orbit.

What was that? A loud metallic clang, brusquely repeated again and again, and mingling with other and fainter sounds that I could not distinguish so clearly. 'This will never do!' I exclaimed, as I hurriedly threw on some of my clothes, and lighted another candle at the flame of the one which was still in Carry's trembling hand. 'Some evil-disposed persons must be breaking in, below there.' And, disregarding my wife's entreaties that I would stay where I was, and not rush uselessly into danger, I snatched up the only apology for a weapon which I could see at the moment, and which was the butt-end of a stout fishing-rod, with a broad-bladed spear screwed into the brass-bound hickory, and went out to reconnoitre. In the passage and on the landing-place, the noise was more plainly to be heard than in the room I had left, and it was manifest, too, that the sounds ascended from the lower part of the house. There was a trampling of feet, a hoarse clamour as of smothered voices, and, clearer than all, the clash and clang of metal violently brought into collision.

I ran down the great oak staircase, Carry following me as far as the landing, and still imploring me to be prudent. But the noise was now so terrific, that I hardly heard her voice. As I descended the stairs, I could have sworn that a fierce combat was going on below. There was a roar of confused half-articulate sounds, that appeared more like stifled threats, and savage curses, and cries for aid, mingled in one hideous chorus, than anything else, and yet I could not distinguish a single word. It was only the intonation that could give me the least inkling of what was going on, while mixed with these vocal sounds were those of booted feet stamping hard on a wooden floor or on a stone pavement, probably the latter, for I was sure that I heard the peculiar ring of spur-rowsels on the bare flags, and, sharper still, the clash of swords. Yes; swords alone, surely, could produce that quick strident clatter, not to be confounded for a moment with the clink of a housebreaker's crow-bar, or the rasping of a file. There was not much time for consideration, and I ran across the great gloomy entrance-hall towards the low-browed entrance of a passage, from which these startling sounds apparently issued. There was an oaken door with heavy nails studding it that served to shut off this part of the house, the western wing, from the habitable portion, and this arched door was slowly flapping to and fro in the night-wind (being ajar), like the wing of some dying bird of prey. Impatiently I tore it open, and, as I did so, something flew in my face, something hard, and hairy, and leathery all at once, eluding my grasp as I instinctively snatched at it, letting fall my candle as I did so. It was but a bat, as I knew when I recognised its low whistling cry a moment later, but my candle had been extinguished in its fall,

and there I was in the dark. Almost at the same instant the swords ceased to clash, and there was a short interval of silence.

I have said that the silence which ensued was but of short duration, but to me it seemed very long—minutes, hours, of tedious expectancy, so very differently does Time keep step under varying circumstances. There was an agony of waiting, and then came a long, wild, horrible scream, from a woman's voice, it seemed to me, that rang through the Old Manor-house from garret to cellar—such a scream as it would have been painful to hearken to at any time, but that, amidst those grim surroundings, and at that late hour in a lonely place, seemed to pierce the very marrow of my bones, and to make my hair bristle with horror. For a moment I stood as if my feet were glued to the mildewed stones of the pavement, but in the next I had dashed across the entrance-hall and up the stairs, in so blind and senseless a panic, that I fancied I was pursued, though by what I knew not, and imagined a fleshless hand ready to clutch me as I fled. I found my wife, half-fainting, at the top of the broad staircase. I suppose I looked ghastly enough, for at the sight of me Carry shrieked, and her shrieks were echoed by the voice of Jane, our little servant, from the floor above. These sounds of human distress recalled me to something like presence of mind, and somehow, I scarcely remember by what arguments, I reassured Carry in some degree, the more easily, perhaps, that the extraordinary noises below now stopped as abruptly as they had begun, and that only the wind and the groaning trees combined to break the silence.

The disturbances did not recur, but there was little rest for any one in the Old Manor-house during the remaining hours of darkness. My wife was dreadfully agitated, and in her feminine logic she contrived so ingeniously to mix up burglars with goblins, that it was difficult to reassure her. The more clearly I pointed out the absurdity of supposing that Bill Sykes and his amiable brotherhood would proclaim their felonious entry into a house by so infernal a clamour, and the more contempt I expressed for the vulgar belief in ghosts, the more Carry shuddered, and the more she clung to me with fond loving prayers and tears, in her anxiety to prevent me from returning to those lower regions whence the frightful din had obviously proceeded. I could not quite make out what it was that my wife feared on my behalf, and I do not think her ideas on the subject were remarkable for coherence; but I was obliged to renounce my design of going down to explore the ground-floor of the western wing before day-dawn. And this was some sacrifice, for an Englishman never likes to look ridiculous, even in his own eyes, and I was sensitive to the idea that, in my panic-stricken flight from something (or nothing) below-stairs, I had compromised the dignity of an educated man of the enlightened nineteenth century.

All the histories I had read in my childhood, histories with a wholesome moral, that proved ghost-seers and ghost-fearers to be dupes and gulls, rose up before me, and pointed the finger of deserved scorn at my pusillanimity. Why had I been so weakly credulous as to turn and bolt from an invisible, probably an imaginary peril, from a noise that I could not account for? Was I, at six-

and-twenty, no braver than the child that cries because it finds itself alone in the dark. There always is—so I argued with myself—a rational explanation of alarming phenomena, if we can but have the patience to find it; and I gave up my wish, and with it a good deal of my self-respect, when I found myself compelled to promise Carry that I would wait for daylight before I ventured into the uninhabited west wing.

Then Jane had to be attended to. That small handmaiden had given no sign of hearing the horrid noise until she heard the voice of her mistress, and then she made up for lost time by setting up a series of squeals such as I thought nothing but a pig under the butcher's knife could have perpetrated, and which grew all the more vehement as the silence down-stairs became a confirmed fact. Then she proved to have locked herself into her attic, and all Carry's persuasions could not induce her to open the door, behind which she remained, sobbing and moaning, in utter defiance of all womanly blandishments, as well as of—when these were tried—all assertions of lawful domestic authority. A miserable night it was; and when morning came, it shewed us as two heavy-eyed, pale-cheeked faces as need be, before the queer old mirrors in their black frames. Fortunately, an August night is not a very long one; and when there was plenty of light pouring in through the windows, I held myself quit of my promise, and went down to examine the scene of the nocturnal turmoil.

I found nothing. There was the desolate west wing as when I had strolled through it when shewing our Shinglesea friends over our new dwelling, the bare rooms, all cobwebs, dust, damp, and crumbled plaster, but without a perceptible trace of occupation. As for a burglary, there were no more signs of such an enterprise commenced or carried out than if the wretchedness of the past night had been a mere dream. The windows, and shutters, and doors were secure; the fastenings had not been tampered with. There were no foot-marks in the moist earth of the garden, or in the rain-softened gravel of the newly rolled carriage-drive. I walked round the house on purpose to ascertain if any such tell-tale prints did in effect exist, and I thought myself rather clever for doing so. But I had my trouble for nothing; never a trace could I discover.

The day did not begin under very favourable auspices. It rained still, and there was a high wind, though, as usual, the fury of the storm had abated when day came on. But within the old mansion there was little contentment. Breakfast was late; the kettle did not boil, and the eggs were overdone. The rasher was carbonised, and the toast as cold and sodden as it should have been crisp and hot. Jane's demeanour was very odd. She went about in a state of nascent hysterics, sobbed behind doors, and was as mute as if rehearsing the character of Fenella for a private dramatic rendering of *Peperil of the Peak*. With all this, our small servant had a singular air of resentment, and took Carry's comfortings in anything but an amiable spirit, being evidently disposed to hold her employers personally responsible for the miseries of the previous night. This insubordinate feeling broke out into flat rebellion when, after breakfast, Carry and I prepared to start for Shinglesea. Then Jane found a tongue to say

that she couldn't, no, nor wouldn't, be left alone all day in that orful house. Sooner than that, she would set off herself, and walk barefoot to Exeter, if there wasn't a Christian nearer. She meant no offence, and was very sorry, but put upon to that extent she could not bear to be, for any considerations of wages and tea and sugar; and how master and missis could so expect, it passed Jane's imagination to conceive.

Now, this from Jane was a very remarkable outburst. Our small retainer was a good little creature, belonging to a respectable family of hard-working church-goers, and she had herself been a sort of prize pupil in the Shinglesea school, and one whom Carry had taught many a time, and had rendered nearly perfect in the geography of Canaan and the names of the kings. She was one of those demure young persons who really seem content to do their duty unrepiningly in a very humble station, and we were proportionably unprepared for even constructive sedition on her part. But fear is a great leveller; and I had to explain to Carry that the girl's dread of being left alone in the old house was natural and reasonable after such a night of confusion, and that I was sure no wilful disrespect was intended. Leaving my wife, therefore, to put her former pupil through a course of Catechism, as the best means of sobering her ruffled temper, I fetched an old woman from the adjoining village; and this ancient matron, for the guerdon of a shilling, willingly agreeing to bear Jane company until our return, my wife and I took our umbrellas and walked to Shinglesea through the rain. For the rain, however, Carry cared little; and indeed, as the day wore on, she recovered her spirits amazingly, and became quite her own dear self again. I confess that I felt not a little ashamed when I found myself in the midst of an open-mouthed and open-eyed circle of relations and friends, the hero of a ghost-story. The report spread far and wide, and nearly every one who had the pleasure of an acquaintance with the Dawkins family came crowding in to hear and to talk. One might have thought the parsonage was on fire, so great was the press towards that modest clerical dwelling. Opinions varied: intense excitement, hungry, horror-stricken curiosity, and a kind of savouring and relishing of the supernatural element in the tale—such were the prevailing symptoms. 'What an escape we had had!' cried a chorus of lady-voices. It was declared to be a mercy our hair had not turned gray in a single night, like that of certain personages in modern history. And how brave Mr Wilton had been! At hearing which unmerited praise, I winced. Pretty bravery, to run like a hare before the greyhounds, because a bat flew in my face, and the candle went out, and there were some odd noises that I could not exactly account for! I grew quite cross as Carry herself joined the others in vowing that I had shewn the courage of a lion.

But I, for my part, had certainly not walked down to Shinglesea for mere idle gossip. There were two or three gentlemen there whose judgment on the subject I wished to procure for my own satisfaction, as well as for the clearing up of the mystery. Among these was a doctor, reputed to have the hardest head in the watering-place; two retired Indian officers; and the lieutenant in charge of the coast-guard station, a quick-witted downright sailor, not easily to be taken in. These,

and several other friends of both sexes, willingly accompanied us back to the Old Manor-house; and a very thorough search we made in every conceivable nook and corner, but without success. There were no signs of robbers. A hoax, on the other hand, seemed out of the question. Who were the practical jokers, at quiet Shinglesea, who were capable of so crafty and impudent a raid upon the night's rest of an unoffending neighbour? And how, above all, could such obtrusive wags have found access to the house without stirring bolt, bar, or lock, and without leaving the dint of a foot in the soft mould without? The thing was preposterous.

But it was easier to point out what could not, than what could have happened. The hard-headed doctor did his utmost to persuade us and himself that ephialtes, or nightmare, an excited imagination, and so forth, had been the true causes of what he chose to call our singular hallucination of the past night; but it was a lame theory at best, and had soon not a leg left to stand on. The naval lieutenant hunted high and low, like a terrier seeking a rat; and the Indian officers broached a number of ingenious hypotheses as to wind, trees, echoes, dripping water, loose slates, mice, crumbling ruins, and chimneys in which owls and jackdaws built their nests; but nobody was in the least degree satisfied with these efforts to explain away the noises of a few hours since. There remained the ghost belief pure and simple, but to that every one was ashamed to give in his adherence. So people frowned, and peeped into the deserted rooms, and went down to the cellars, or what was left of them, for much of the roofing had fallen in; and stones, bricks, the crushed fragments of broken wine-bottles, and the decayed bins where once claret had been stored, blocked up the entrance.

The search led to no result. Heads were shaken, and the business was pronounced decidedly a queer one; but as for our slumbers being broken by ghosts, that, of course, was all sheer nonsense. For all that, several of our friends urged us very much to return with them to Shinglesea, and not to spend another night under the roof of the Manor-house; but to this we would not consent. I was piqued and angry with myself for not having probed the affair to the bottom, and I certainly did not choose to shew the white-feather by running away at the first alarm. Carry, dear girl, for my sake, affected to be very confident that the disturbance would not recur, and stoutly refused to accept a bed at the parsonage. 'No, no,' she said with a laugh; 'it was all very absurd, and no doubt caused by something very harmless, if only we knew what. Had she not heard of haunted houses before this, that proved to have got a bad name through rats, or cats, or some such creatures! No; she would stay; and Charles, who had been so cool and brave through it all, would take care of her.'

Our friends left us then. The stir and bustle of the incursion of visitors had cheered up Jane a little; but after dark, her spirits went down to zero, and she manifested such extreme unwillingness to remain alone in the enormous kitchen, that my wife called her into her room to talk to her for half an hour or so, while I strolled up and down under the windows that overlooked the garden, smoking my cigar as I racked my brains to guess some answer to the dark riddle that had

been so disagreeably set before me. When I came indoors, I found my wife rather agitated. Jane's tongue had been busy, and she had retailed to Carry a great deal of legendary information derived from the garrulous old beldam whom I had hired from the village to keep the girl company.

'O Charley, dear,' said my wife eagerly, but reluctant, too, to speak out, 'that old Mrs Simcox has been turning Jane's head, telling her *such* terrible things.'

I did not doubt it, and to this effect I answered with a smile.

'Don't laugh, dear,' said Carry, 'for perhaps—Yours is a very old family. Do you know that, ever so long ago, one of your ancestors was—hanged?'

'Not to my knowledge, love,' I said: 'I daresay, however, that many of them deserved it.'

But Carry began to cry. It was no joking matter, she said. One of the Wiltons, three hundred years since, had, according to Mrs Simcox and popular report, been guilty of a dreadful crime—no less than a double murder, one of the victims being his young wife, unjustly suspected of infidelity, and the other a gentleman from a neighbouring county, a kinsman and guest of the murderer, who fell upon him with the help of hired ruffians, and treacherously put him to death, after a valiant resistance. It was added that the doer of the deed had been righteously condemned to death, but had bought his pardon by a bribe, and had soon afterwards miserably perished in a snowstorm on the moors, when belated in hunting. Further, that at frequent but uncertain intervals, the hideous scene of the murder, in all its horrors, was re-enacted under the accursed roof of the Old Manor-house, whence its evil repute and the fact that no one, save only Squire George, who feared nothing, had for many a year dared to inhabit it.

Now, this ugly old history, embellished very likely by tradition, had still about it something of the stamp of truth. My father was not a man given to talk of genealogy, but I did remember to have heard him say something of an ancestor sentenced to death, in good Queen Beas's golden days, and who escaped by buying the good word of some needy court favourite. My father had mentioned this as a mere casual illustration of the corruption of that Old England which we see through a haze of romance, but I began to suspect that the tale might be very nearly an authentic one. And if so, how appropriate was the hellish din of the past night! What more natural, given a belief in ghosts, and in their power of haunting the scenes of their crimes or sufferings, than that the noises we had heard should be actually produced by the restless spirits of the actors in this Elizabethan drama. I was staggered, but not convinced. There was something almost too plausible in the adjustment of the scenic effects to the characters; and a suspicion that I was, after all, merely the dupe of some wily trickster, rose up in my breast. I did my best to laugh the matter off with Carry, and we went to bed without expressing any apprehensions.

The night passed quietly. There was no unusual sound, and I was half-provoked at the lull that had succeeded to the previous stormy weather. The day passed as quietly, and then it was night again. Then, indeed, we had noise enough. All the horrors of the first alarm were renewed.

Again the wild demon laughter broke the stillness suddenly. Again the swords clashed; the angry, inarticulate threats mingled with the tread of heavy feet, and the piercing, agonised scream of a woman rang through the house from garret to cellar. This time I was deaf to Carry's prayers, and with a bull's-eye lantern, which I had in readiness, and a revolver, borrowed from my friend the naval lieutenant, I searched high and low, exploring all the west wing, even to the ruined turret—in vain. It was a fearful night, and Carry quite broke down; while I, unable to calm her, longed for morning. When it was broad daylight, Jane was returned as missing. She had run away home to her parents at Shinglesea, as soon as she could gain courage from the first glimpse of welcome sunshine; and I had, with unaccustomed hands, to light the kitchen fire, and prepare, as best I could, our comfortless breakfast. My wife's white cheeks and swollen eyes filled me with a sort of remorse.

'After breakfast, my darling,' said I, 'I will send a farm-lad down to Shinglesea for a fly, and we will go down at once, and take a temporary lodging, since here, of course, we cannot remain.'

Carry, sobbing, threw her arms round my neck, and kissed me, declaring that I had taken a load off her heart, for she had made up her mind not to ask to be taken away from that dreadful, dreadful place, if I were really bent on stopping, but the horror of it was killing her. We went to Shinglesea accordingly; and while Carry and her sisters sallied forth in search of rooms, I went at once to the station, and knocked at the door of the coast-guard lieutenant's quarters.

'You just come in the nick of time, Wilton, my dear fellow,' he said, laughing, 'for I have been explaining your troubles to Mr Springer here, the new superintendent, whom you have heard of.'

I had heard of this new chief of the Shinglesea police as a very good officer, formerly a London detective, and who was said to have effected some remarkable captures in his former capacity. I found him to be a thin, quiet-looking man, tightly buttoned up in his dark-blue braided surcoat, but with nothing noteworthy in his appearance beyond a peculiar patient expression of the eye. He heard me out without interruption, asked a few questions in a very modest way, and made a memorandum or two in his pocket-book.

'Superintendent Springer, I need hardly say, does not go in for the ghost theory, Wilton, my boy,' remarked the lieutenant, with twinkling eyes. The astute Superintendent Springer coughed apologetically. He could not, he said, give any decided opinion on that head. Ghosts, as ghosts, might be all very well. He believed there was some diversity among the learned and the clergy as to what ghosts could do, and as to what they could not. He, Silas Springer, was a plain man, and could only deal with coarse common flesh and blood. We wouldn't ask him, he was sure, to catch hold of a ghost by the coat collar, or to slip a pair of handcuffs over a ghost's wrists. Naturally not. But what Mr Superintendent Springer could, and did, ask the lieutenant and myself to do, was to step round to the police station at half-past ten o'clock to a minute; and, further, to keep the fact of this appointment a profound secret from our nearest and dearest, failing which precaution the spell might be broken,

or, to employ Mr Silas Springer's more sporting phraseology, the 'oracle wouldn't work.'

'Easy conditions for me, Charley,' said my naval friend, as we shook hands and parted, 'seeing that my nearest and dearest are a set of tough old tarpaulins, with big whiskers and glazed hats, always tending their potatoes and children when off the duty of peering through Admiralty telescopes after imaginary smugglers. But how you are to keep Mrs Wilton in the dark, from now till half-past ten, is more than a profane bachelor like myself can pretend to say. Not that either of us know anything. If there is a secret, Springer keeps it very much to himself. But he is not the sort of fellow to give a useless warning.'

A long, dreary afternoon it was, considering the almost perpetual gabble of tongues, and the bewildering amount of comment and conjecture rained upon my devoted head. I found, to my surprise, that half the people in Shinglesea knew the ghost story; and that as for my having had an ancestor constructively hanged (some said two or three) for a particularly atrocious homicide, this was matter of notoriety, only that no one had quite liked to mention it to me, on account of the feelings of the family. Of course, we could never go back to the Old Manor-house again; and of course, too, to sublet was hopeless; and what a dead weight upon us the rent would be, since it is not open to plead in a court of justice that ghosts, like bugs, render a house unfit for human habitation. This sort of Job's comfort went on all day, and very glad I was when night banished the greater part of my tormentors. Ten came, a quarter past, twenty minutes; and telling Carry that I had promised to 'look in' and smoke a cigar with the lieutenant, and that she must not be frightened if I chanced to be a little late, off I went, rather against my dear little wife's wish, but that was better than bringing on a parody on the parting of Hector and Andromache, by any hint of my intention to go back to the fatal Manor-house.

At the police station, I found two carriages standing ready, each with a policeman beside the driver.

'You, Mr Wilton, and the lieutenant,' said Superintendent Springer, 'will perhaps condescend to go up in this fly. I, with this gent, go in the other.'

The 'gent' in question was a slinking, underhung, sidling fellow of five-and-thirty, dressed in ill-fitting new clothes of a flashy character, and with a shallow black eye and a mean, cringing manner. He seemed very deferential to Mr Springer, and followed that officer as a dog might have done. Off we drove; and before we were within sight of Wilton, both carriages stopped, and we alighted. A group of men, sheltered under a bank, evidently awaited us there.

'This is Mr Burke, the superintendent of the county police,' said the ex-detective, by way of introduction; 'and these are some of his people, and some of mine.—The men are posted round the house, I suppose, Superintendent Burke?'

'I'll defy a mouse to get out of it,' said Mr Burke, who was a policeman of few words.

'Now, gentlemen,' said Mr Springer, 'if you'll only please to come quietly after me, the constables will follow. We couldn't venture to drive nearer, because of the giving alarm by the wheels.'

No more was said. The superintendent, and the

slinking uneasy person who was now his inseparable companion, led the way, and we soon came in sight of the old house. Avoiding the carriage-road, our conductor led us, to my surprise, direct to the wooded dingle, some bowshot distance from the dwelling, and we all crushed our way, as best we might, through the rank nettles, and the hazel branches and brambles. Suddenly, our actual guide—the ill-looking fellow in the glossy new clothes—stopped, rubbed his forehead very hard with a red cotton handkerchief, and drew a deep breath or two, like a swimmer after a plunge. 'Selp you all,' he said hoarsely; 'you'll speak up to say I comed here of my own freewill. I'm not to be clapped behind the spikes along of the lot of them?' This appeal, collectively addressed, was to me but dimly intelligible, but the police superintendent made encouraging answer, to the effect that if the last speaker was 'on the square,' so were we. Hereupon, the ill-looking man stooped, and, groping among the trailing vegetation at his feet, by a great effort dragged open what seemed to be a trap-door, of old and corroded wood, but so artfully dissembled by moss and spongy turf, fixed on it, as it was afterwards proved, by the help of some waterproof preparation of glue, as to be imperceptible to the sharpest-eyed urchin that ever ventured to seek mushrooms or dry sticks so near the haunted house. This trap-door, once lifted, revealed a set of broken stone steps leading into a vaulted passage, chill and dismal as a grave. This we traversed on tiptoe, according to the whispered instructions of our guide; and after stumbling over heaps of rubbish, we found ourselves in a cellar, empty, save for a few shattered ale-butts, and where the bull's-eye lanterns of the policemen shewed us many a dangerous hole in the broken floor. A few steps more, and the gleam of light through the chinks in a rude wooden partition, and the hum of voices, warned us to extra caution.

'Are ye ready, mates?' asked our guide in an excited whisper, as he grasped the handle of a door. The superintendent nodded assent. The door was flung open, and we rushed into a large apartment, lighted by several lamps, and were received by a frantic hubbub of amazement, rage, and execration, as we suddenly intruded on the scientific privacy of seven men and a woman, all busily at work, with dipping-baths, furnace, crucibles, galvanic batteries, and moulds of plaster of Paris, in counterfeiting Her Majesty's gold and silver coinage, according to the most approved principles of that felonious art in which they were adepts. There was a smart scuffle, and I think I knocked somebody down. I hope, with all my heart, that it was the scoundrel who had acted as choir-master in the horrible concert of the previous night. At last, handcuffs were locked on the rascally wrists of all these subterranean felons; but it was terrible to hear the threats which they still directed against Slinking Joe, their treacherous accomplice, who had, it seemed, been on that very morning detected in Shinglesea in the act of passing off bad money, with ten pewter half-crowns in his pocket, and who had preferred to turn Queen's evidence to expiating his offence against the laws.

I have not much more to tell. The revelations of Slinking Joe proved the means of breaking up the oldest and most mischievous gang of coiners in the west of England. These miscreants, fully

appreciating the advantages of a haunted house, and having by accident discovered the secret passage leading to the abandoned cellarage, had taken good care to frighten away, by diabolical noises, any tenant whose presence might prove unwelcome. One other result there did accrue from this capture: in a drawer of an old bureau, in this coiners' den, was found a will superseding that which gave the Wilton estate to Greenwich Hospital, and by which Uncle George left all he had to 'my dear brother, Major Wilton, and his heirs male, for ever.' No doubt, this piece of furniture, which was half full of counterfeit shillings, had been carried down-stairs by the coiners, ignorant of the value of their prize. And thus the Wilton property came back to us, after all.

TOOTH-DRAWING EXTRAORDINARY.

EVERY one must by this time know the Thames Embankment, and can tell you literally how it was formed upon the old mud-slope—the *Père-la-Chaise* of the defunct cats and dogs of the metropolis; but, metaphorically, it was made by a huge bite taken by government from the Thames' bed. In fact, government stuck its teeth into the river; those teeth being the huge timber-piles—massive squared pine trees, armed at one end with an iron point, protected at the other by an iron ring, to prevent splitting when the well-known iron 'monkey' rose and fell, delivering those thudding blows which drove the piles eight, ten, or fourteen feet into the river-bed for the formation of a dam, to keep out the water while the foundations of the noble roadway were made. Now that the handsome granite facing is there to resist the wash of the tide, the piles remain slimy and sodden, their occupation done; and to view the drawing of these teeth, it has been the custom for knots of idlers to collect upon the embankment, watching the process, slow and sure; the attaching of the instrument, the tightening, the creaking groan, the 'scraunch,' and then the floating of the huge tooth, ready to form one of a new set when a fresh bite shall be taken from the river.

The process is simple and efficacious, though very slow. A pile is driven a little out of the perpendicular by wedges—enough to allow the noose of a mighty chain to be slipped round it, the weight of the chain taking it to the bottom of the river, where, upon being tightened, it clasps the pile where it issues from the muddy ooze. The other end of the chain is carried over a massive wheel at the end of a roughly formed crane, fixed in an empty barge, with the usual strong and complicated windlass. The barge is large, and in its emptiness, buoyant; and as four men begin to wind in the chain, the effect is, at first, not the drawing out of the pile, but the drawing down of the barge, slowly, inch by inch, foot by foot, till the edge is within a hand-breadth or so of the water, and it is plain that if the pile does not soon give way, the workers of the windlass must, for before the barge could be drawn down another foot, the water would be rushing in, and the result a wreck. A foreman gives a glance round, and makes another signal; the windlass creaks again, as it winds in the chain, for he has seen that they may go a little farther yet, and the barge descends another inch into the water—another, and another; and then, when it seems that all that is possible has been done, and

that, to obtain a victory, fresh power must be added from another barge, the tooth gives way, and rises slowly, higher and higher, the barge floats up, and the next minute the pile lies upon the surface, muddied and covered with black adherent gravel.

'Why not use steam?' says a looker-on.—'Ah, that'd be too swift for them!' The fact being that, apparently, no one has as yet devoted his energies to the manufacturing of a pile-drawing machine. A few years ago, every pile was slowly driven in by a hand-worked windlass, now a steam-engine does the work at a rapid rate. There seems, then, to be an opening for some genius with inventive powers, especially as river-side improvements are now in full progress, and the teeth to be drawn will doubtless yet be numbered by the million.

JUNE.

SUNNIEST child of the fruitful year,
Why, fair June, is thy foot so fleet?
Niobe-April's a youngling's tear,
A half-freed Ariel, sadly sweet;
Fierce July, of the fire-flushed face,
Bodeth the autumn's dreamful dusk;
But oh! for the rose-month's life and grace,
Its song of sweetness, its balm of musk.

Sweet—but thy roses fade so fast;
Fair—but thy beauty's a fleeting smile;
Bright—but thy glory may not last;
Warm, heart-warm, but a little while;
Sweet, fair, warm, bright,
She, the queen of my crowning June;
Dead—and the blossom is touched with blight;
Still—and the bird hath lost its tune.

Came she not with the earliest rose,
Slowly blossoming, shyly sweet?
Passed she not with the rose-month's close,
Whither I follow with laggard feet?
June of the year, of the heart, of life,
Why, ah why were thy days so few?
Haleyon pause in a weary strife,
Bright but fleet as thy matin dew.

There she stood, where the blush-rose trails—
There, by the bust of the marble faun;
Ah! but the heart within me fails;
A ghostly rustle of snow-soft lawn
Creeps on my ear till I start and flush,
Momentarily dreaming a face to see,
That never again, with its rose-soft blush,
Shall come through the roses of June to me.

Say, dost thou look from the farther shore,
And pity me here with the faded rose
Of a vanished summer, yet treasured more
Than the myriad blooms that to-day uncloze?
Ah! speak, love, speak through the holy night,
And tell me when I may join thee sweet,
Where love and the roses fear no blight,
And the June-day joys less swiftly fleet.

THE LIFE OF SIR WALTER SCOTT, written by the late R. CHAMBERS, LL.D., has been for some time preparing for publication, under the Editorship of W. CHAMBERS, and is now ready. To it is added ABBOTSFORD NOTANDA, by R. CARRUTHERS, LL.D. Price half-a-crown, Roxburghe style of binding.

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